

Isaiah Chapter 9 – John Karmelich

1. Let me start with some "big picture" aspects of this book. The way I describe the book is that it's a mixture of things going on in Isaiah's world back then with a lot of big picture ideas of what will occur in the short term and long term future. While I'm positive my Jewish friends who read this won't agree with me, I also see Isaiah telling us much about the First and Second Coming of Jesus within the pages of this book. I state all of that to start this lesson, because Chapter Nine features a lot of titles that we Christians associate with Jesus. To my Jewish friends, I ask that you tolerate me as I go through some of these titles and you can see for yourself if they're only talking about God the Father, or some other Messiah or one of the other Israelite kings who lived millenniums ago. My point is if we're going to study Isaiah, it's important we understand who's he's writing about within the pages of this book.
 - a) OK, if you're a Christian reading this and thinking, I already believe the Old Testament is full of predictions about Jesus and I'm sure that Isaiah is no exception, tell me why should I study this stuff? For starters, when we have days when we have our doubts about Jesus, we can realize the Old Testament was completed long before Jesus was born. Seeing all of these predictions about Him remind us of the reality of His existence and how His plans for the world were in the works, long before Jesus came in the world.
 - b) Next it's to realize that while Isaiah was mainly writing to the Israelites willing to listen to him in his era about the problems they were facing, the application is "universal" in that it can apply to anyone and everyone who believes in the true God as being in charge of our of our lives and that Jesus paid the full price for all our sins. As I love to say, I believe in all of that, "Now what"? The now what for this book as well as for this specific lesson is to realize he's writing to encourage us that despite whatever issue we're dealing with at this time, God's got a plan for our lives as He knows all things including what's the future for our lives as well as the human race.
 - c) To put it another way, we can choose at any moment in time and do whatever we feel like doing, or we can pay attention to God's plan for humanity and choose to be part of it. It's about realizing we're free at any time to do His will, but because He knows all things, He works through us to do His will to make a difference for Him. Believe it or not, that's the greatest way to have joy in our lives, by choosing to live by His will and doing our best to choose what we believe is His will for our lives by obeying His commandments and then making the best decisions possible within the framework of those commandments.
2. OK John, that's all well and good and I guess I sort of believe that as I do trust in God. What does any of this have to do with Isaiah Chapter 9? So glad you asked! Isaiah takes the problem of the moment and uses it as excuse to explain the glorious future that will occur to that land. Here's a big clue: The first part of Israel to be destroyed by the coming Assyrian invasion is the Northern most parts of Israel. Isaiah says that same land area will be blessed, as Jesus will perform most of His greatest miracles in that same area. Yes that's a paraphrase of something Matthew said, as he quotes this chapter in his gospel. My point is simply that while Isaiah's focusing on the problems of the moment and explaining the big picture of the suffering they'll endure, there's a wonderful long term plan for the future of that land over and above what they have to deal with.
 - a) Good for the ancient Israelites I suppose. What does that have to do with us? Just as God has a great eternal plan for that land, so He has a great eternal plan for those of us who do chose to commit our lives to serving Him. It's realizing, God knows what we have to deal with at any moment. He wants to guide us through those issues because He loves us and has a wonderful plan for our eternal future as we trust in Him. My point is whatever we have to deal with in this lifetime, at the most it only lasts for this lifetime. My point is the greatest way to have joy is when we do use our lives to be part of His plan for the world. That's what Isaiah's preaching here.

3. With all that said, let me summarize Chapter 9 in a few thoughts. Isaiah's still focusing upon the problems the Israelites are facing at the moment: The Northern Israelite kingdom along with the neighboring land of Syria are threatening the Southern Kingdom. At the same time, a bigger issue is "brewing" as there is a growing empire called the Assyrians who are threatening to destroy any and all cities and countries in their path. After the Assyrians destroy a place they move who's left elsewhere so they don't organize a rebellion. My point is despite all of this upcoming destruction Isaiah pauses to give the good news of a promised king who will come to help all the Israelites.
- a) The Jewish people call this king "the" Messiah. If you don't know the English word Christ is based on a Greek translation of "Messiah". I mention this because this chapter describes what the Messiah will be like. There are aspects of Jesus First and Second Coming that tie to that description. What I'll do in this lesson is explain why those titles are here and how they tie to Israel's short term and long term problems that Isaiah's focusing upon.
 - b) As important as that is, that's not the whole chapter. The second half is Isaiah explaining the significance of the Messiah's coming and how that should effect how the Israelites are to deal with their current problems. To put all of that in our vocabulary yes we Christians believe Jesus lived on earth 2,000 years ago, we also believe He's fully God and fully man, and we believe He'll return one day. As I love to say, "Now what?" How does any of that affect the fact that we're facing issues we have to deal with right now? Remember Isaiah's trying to encourage those Israelites about their long-term future and get their focus off of their problems of the moment. That's in effect what Isaiah's trying to do for us Christians as well as work our way through this book.
 - c) To continue my "now what" question, this book and this chapter in particular, remind us that whatever we're dealing with at this moment, will last at the most for this lifetime. To focus upon God's eternal plan has eternal benefits that last forever. More importantly it'll also bring us joy despite whatever problems we're facing as we realize the glorious future we have by trusting in the return of the Messiah! In other words, Isaiah is saying, "I'm all too aware of the problems we're facing at the moment." He's asking us to realize God's still in charge, He still wants to guide our lives, still wants to fill us with joy and lead us as we deal with whatever we're facing. Yes this chapter is full of warnings of what'll happen to us if we reject God's offer of guidance. The underlying point is to realize God's still there as He loves us as individuals and wants to lead us down the path He desires for our lives.
 - d) So what do we call this chapter? How about, "Seeing how God's eternal plans for our life are unfolding in spite of whatever issue's we're facing right now". While it's not a perfect description of the events of this chapter, it gives us the underlying message as we read of Isaiah telling us God's plans for the world when the Messiah comes to rule over it!
 - e) With that said, time for the details:
4. Chapter 9, Verse 1: Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan--
- a) Let's start by realizing that in the original Hebrew there were no chapter breaks. The last thing Isaiah was discussing in the previous chapter was about how the Northern Israelite Kingdom will soon be destroyed by the Assyrian Empire. The point as it relates to these verses is the section of Israel that'll receive the most damage is the "land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali". OK, I'd say that requires an explanation, so here goes:
 - i) When the Israelites first conquered that land roughly a millennium prior to when Isaiah was writing, the land was divided up into the "12 tribes". The simple point is that two of those 12 tribes were named Zebulun and Naphtali. To recall a little more history, there was a king after Solomon who was not a good leader. At that time, 10 of the 12 tribes formed their own kingdom and two tribes remained loyal to the Southern Kingdom. That's how the Northern and Southern Israelite began. Isaiah lived centuries later, and both kingdoms were still around at this time.

- ii) I also hold the view that by the time Isaiah wrote this, not everybody who lived in the land of "Zebulun" were descendants of that tribe. I don't believe there are ten lost tribes of Israel today. I could give a whole bible lesson on that, but to make it simple, by the time Isaiah was around, those people who were loyal to God moved to the Southern Kingdom where it was safe to worship Him. This is implied in 2nd Chronicles Chapter 11. What's also implied from that chapter is the Israelites who didn't want to be that religious, moved to the northern kingdom. My point here is that by the time Isaiah lived, I'm convinced a lot of Israelites weren't living in their territory of their ancestors. Today few Israelites know what tribe they are from as the records were destroyed when the Romans destroyed their temple in 70AD. A few know it based on their last name, but most have no idea of their tribal history.
- b) OK enough of the history lesson. I gave all that background in order for us to understand that when Isaiah is talking about the land of Zebulun and Naphtali here, he's not referring to the tribes who descended from that land, but the physical land itself. I've always found it strange that the God who created everything we can see or comprehend, has effectively said, "this little piece of real estate we call Israel is Mine so don't mess with it". My point here is that Isaiah is describing the land in future tense: how the Assyrian army will do its worst physical damage to the parts of Israel that's still to this day referred to as the land of Zebulun and Naphtali.
 - i) To paraphrase Isaiah here, "Yes, this land will see some horrible damage done to it by the Assyrians. However, God will make up for it by having "the" Messiah do some of His best miracles in this same land." So you know the Gospel of Matthew makes references to Verses 1 and 2 in stating this is talking about Jesus. (Matthew 4:16 is the reference.)
 - ii) To my Jewish readers, do you really think there's going to be another person who'll do more miracles than Jesus did in this region? Even if you accept the possibility that Isaiah is describing Jesus, I'm well aware that doesn't prove Jesus is God, and we'll get to that discussion in a few pages. It's hard to argue that this passage talks of another Israelite king as no other king ever ruled over the entire land of Israel.
 - iii) My point is whatever Isaiah is predicting, it has to be "future" because there never was another king that reunited the entire land of Israel. Even if you argue it refers to the modern nation of Israel, we've yet to see any miracle that matches anything Jesus performed in this specific area of land at that time.
 - iv) That leads us back to us Christians. Even if we accept the fact Jesus really existed and really did most of His miracle works within the areas of these two tribes, how does any of that affect my life today? Like you love to say, "I already believe Jesus died for every sin I'll ever commit, now what?" Consider reading this passage as if you were Jewish living in Northern Israel at that time. Isaiah's telling them, you'll all die soon or be taken into captivity, but I'm going to do great things with this land a long time from now! How's any of that helpful?
 - a) The answer to their problems is in effect the same as our answer: It's about us seeing life from God's eternal perspective. He's well aware of the future we have to face both good and bad. God's well aware of the destruction of our world one day. God's well aware of the good things we have in life as well as the tough things we have to face one day. My point is if we realize that God's aware of all things, it helps us to face whatever we have to face if we realize God's got a plan, He's working it out on His timing and He'll lead us to make a wonderful difference for Him, if we're willing to let Him lead us to make that difference. It's like saying, "things may be tough and may get worse, but I've got a wonderful future plan despite all of that!"

- c) All of that leads me back to Verse 1: That verse says in effect despite the gloom that faces over that land at that time, that land (where those two tribes were based) will have a great future as God's going to bless that land despite the suffering it will endure soon. And this benefits me how? It's to remind us that despite whatever it is we have to deal with at this time, all of it is "worth it" as God has great future plans for our lives.
 - d) With that said, believe it or not, I finally made it to Verse 2:
5. Verse 2: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.
- a) Remember that while I've already described how these verses tie to Jesus, Isaiah himself is not making that point until we get to Verse 2 here.
 - b) At this point, it's probably time to state one of my favorite aspects of bible prophecy: It is written in "patterns" and usually not in single "matter of fact" predictions. When we read bible prophesy, there's often a short-term fulfillment to validate the speaker as a prophet of God and a long-term fulfillment that's the main intention of the writer. The short-term fulfillment has to do with the Assyrians. Yes they destroyed that area. That land also got rebuilt by those people the Assyrians resettled there in that land. My point is simply that this area of real estate was not permanently destroyed never to be inhabited again. It was reused after the Assyrian invasion. Yes of course, it ties to most of the miracles we read of Jesus doing roughly seven centuries later, but I wanted you to see how Isaiah's prediction had both a short and long term fulfillment as that land area was reused after it was taken over by the Assyrians.
 - c) What does all of that have to do with this verse? The "people walking in darkness" refers to those living in the northern parts of Israel both at the time of the Assyrian invasion and at the time Jesus performed most of His miracles. My point is this prediction of typical of those with double fulfillments. The short-term fulfillment is how that land will be reused again, even after all the conquering and resettlement that occurred within a short time of Isaiah's writing. The long-term obviously refers to all the great miracles we read about in the Gospels that mainly occur in the Northern Parts of Israel during Jesus ministry.
 - d) The point for you and me is God allows us to go through tough times, but just as He has a wonderful plan for "His land", so God has a wonderful plan for our eternal future. What I am getting at is simply the idea that God can be trusted despite whatever we have to deal with any given moment.
6. Verse 3: You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.
- a) Despite the usually negative mood of Isaiah through much of this book, every so often he will get positive, especially when he describes the coming of the Messiah. If you haven't figured it out by now, what I really want people reading these studies to have is joy in all of their lives. I'm convinced after a living a pretty long life so far, that the greatest way to have joy in life is to have God as the center of one's life. It dawned on me a long time ago that when Jesus told His disciples they'd have joy in Him, the disciples never asked how do we do that? They just had joy being around Him without having to ask how do any of us get that joy! By just focusing our lives on God, we can experience that joy knowing He has a great eternal plan for our lives no matter what we face.
 - b) The reason I make that point is we can read of Isaiah being full of joy here as he himself is focusing on the coming Messiah and what that'll mean for the nation of Israel. We read of Isaiah describing the future as if it's a "done deal". Isaiah's trying to think of times in their lives where people are normally full of joy and trying to use those happy comparisons to when the day comes the Messiah will arrive. The specific examples Isaiah uses require a short explanation, as they don't necessarily work in our vocabulary. Here goes:

- i) The first is a time of harvest. Unless you're a farmer, you don't appreciate what a happy time a "good harvest" is. Think of it as payday. You've worked hard for a long period of time, and now comes the paycheck. That's what harvest time is for a farmer.
 - ii) The second example is "dividing the plunder". This is describing an army after a battle or war is over and now they get to divide up the "spoils" they conquer. For us it might be a big work project completed and again, now comes "bonus time".
 - iii) The third example sites something from Israel's history roughly a half millennium prior to this event. There was a battle in which a small group of Israel's defeated a much larger threat to that land. That story takes place in the book of Judges.
 - iv) My point is simply that all three examples Isaiah's readers of that day could relate to as examples of when they'd be very happy as a time of rejoicing. The reason he picked the last example is that was when a foreign army was conquering Israel. In the time Isaiah was preaching this message, the Northern Kingdom was about to be conquered. The Southern Kingdom was also being threatened. Isaiah's saying to those Israelites, don't be afraid of the damage to be done as I've got great plans for the long term future of both this land as well as those trusting God to guide us for His glory.
- c) With that said, let me give you a clue as to what's coming up in the next chapter. After he finishes describing the glory of the coming of the Messiah and after Isaiah warns them of the danger of rejecting Him, Isaiah then focuses on God's negative plans for the Assyrians for conquering that land. It's a strange paradox that God uses the Assyrians to punish His people for disobedience and then "blames them for conquering that land". The key for us to understand that paradox is simply that we live in God's world and if it is His world, He has every right to do with it as He pleases whether it hurts us or not.
- i) The point for us to consider is that when God allows us to go through tough times it's because it's part of some greater plan that He has. While it may be painful for us to face whatever we have to face, God allows "it" to occur for some reason we may or may never be aware of why He allows it to occur. If we see our world as a possession of God to use as He sees fit for His purposes, it may help us to face any situation we have to face. If we trust that God has a wonderful eternal plan for us despite those circumstances, we can have joy in our lives despite whatever it is we have to face at any given moment. That's the idea Isaiah's trying to get across here.
- d) In the meantime, Isaiah's trying to describe the joy all of us can have if we focus on God as He works out His plans in our world, both back then and today. Isaiah uses examples the people of that day could relate to as a time of great joy. If we focus on things that bring us joy, consider how much more joy we can have in our lives if we use them to focus on God and His plans for our lives. To put all of this another way, God chooses to use people like you and me to accomplish His will. All we have to do is be willing to submit to His plan for our lives and He's willing to use us. But you may ask how can God ever use me in an amazing way? First, not every "use" by God is on a grand scale. He may use you to lead someone else closer to Him. He may also use us to help others draw closer to Him. It's a matter of telling God, "I'm willing to be used by You and do Your will for my life. Please guide me so I can make a difference for You". Then with the results in God's hands, I see God all the time use people willing to give of their time to make a difference for Him. In that sense, we can have more joy than any other way I can think of to live a life.
- i) Let me give one more illustration and then I'll get back to the text. What if you say I've already wasted my life or now I'm near death? What I can I do now? First we need to realize God's aware of how we've lived to date and all the mistakes we've made. For those in prison or say, on death's doorstep, my point is God can give us peace no matter what the situation and that too is what Isaiah's trying to preach!

7. Verse 5: Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.
- a) Ever stop to think after a war is over, what happens to all the equipment built for those wars? For example, there were millions of boots made for World War II. I'm guessing a lot of people kept them. I'm also guessing many were buried with their war boots on. In Isaiah here, he's saying all those garments and shoes that are now "useless" as they're all covered in blood will now be used for the only good purpose they have left, to be burned.
 - b) Let's remember to see this verse in context. Isaiah's describing life when the Messiah will rule over Israel one day. The last few verses are trying to get the idea across of how much joy everyone will experience when that Messiah comes. Isaiah describes situations they'd feel that would bring them happiness such as "pay day" or a war victory. The idea here is the Messiah would bring more joy than the happiness we feel in those situations. Now he takes it one step further to imply that when the Messiah comes, warfare will no longer be an issue as the Messiah will bring an end to fighting and war materials can be burned up.
 - c) Stop to consider that part of the weekly "Sabbath" ritual for religious Jews is to state that every generation of Jewish people must fight enemies that want to destroy them. Realize that this group has experienced warfare all through its history as being a people separated for God. That's why they've have a great desire for a Messiah to bring them peace so they no longer have to fight such warfare. So why is there always a desire to wipe them out as a nation? Because if the Jewish nation stopped existing, then people wrongly think they'll no longer have to be accountable to God. That's also why I'm convinced Israel as a nation has a separate destiny for Christians. The issue isn't our salvation, its about God keeping His eternal unconditional promises to that nation. That is why the bible spends so much time describing the Messiah ruling over that land.
 - d) Speaking of Him, let's move on to the next verse:
8. Vs. 6: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- a) First, religious Jewish people today will argue that these verses do describe the Messiah. They just deny it ties to Jesus. Stop and consider that Jesus never ruled over the Israelites and never, for example, led a revolt over Rome. That's one reason why Jesus was rejected as the Messiah as the Israelites want a ruling Messiah, not one who'll suffer for their sins. With all that said, let me go through this powerful and famous verse and show us how it is very much describing Jesus in aspects of both His First and Second Coming.
 - b) Let's start with the phrase "child is born". If you stop to think about it, Jesus could have first appeared as a grown man or even an angel. The fact that God choose to bring Him in the world as a baby in a humble setting gives us another "Christmas" prediction. For that reason this verse is often used in Christmas cards and Christmas greetings.
 - c) Then we have a "son is given". Some argue it's repeating "Child is born" said another way for emphasis. Others argue it's a separate issue. Let me explain: When the text says that a son is given, I'm wondering "who's the one giving us this son?" If it's God giving us this gift of the Messiah, that means it's "His son". It's not a 100% proof that Jesus is God's Son, but it's a pretty good clue of that fact and I believe that's what Isaiah's communicating.
 - d) That leads us to the next phrase, "Government will be on His shoulders". Let's be honest, Jesus never overthrew the local government leaders when He came. That's a reason why Jesus is rejected by most religious Jewish people as not being the Messiah. To state what we Christians accept, that's part of Jesus role in His Second Coming. To state a very old joke, when the Messiah comes, the religious Jews will ask, "So is this Your first trip here, or have you been here before?" Yes of course we can make the argument that Christians think of Jesus as ruling over their lives and in that sense the He's ruling over us as we do trust in Him as our eternal ruler. Still, I see this role as future tense when Jesus returns to rule over the world "Forever and Forever".

- e) That leads me to a quick discussion about the "Millennium". Revelation 20 says that there will be a 1,000 year period of the Messiah ruling where Satan will be bound up. There are specific purposes of that 1,000 year period and the last nine chapters of Ezekiel focus upon what life will be like during that time period. My point here is simply that Jesus when He returns rules forever and not just 1,000 years. That specific time period is emphasized in the bible elsewhere for specific purposes. The point here is that when Jesus literally comes to rule over the world it'll be forever, not just a 1,000 years.
- f) OK John, I believe Jesus will return one day to rule. How does that affect all the things we have to deal with right now? The answer is God's putting our issues of the moment in the perspective of all of history. The idea is we have to make the best decisions we can based on whatever we're facing, but whatever we're dealing with won't be permanent. What is permanent is a future world leader sent by God Himself to rule over the world that does belong to Him in the first place! If all that's true, what's taking Him so long? The answer is God's waiting for as many people as possible to serve Him before He "pulls the trigger" and sends Jesus back. There has to be a believer "number x" who's the final one as life as we know it can't go on forever. Just as the world we know it had a beginning, it also has to have an ending one day. Isaiah in effect is describing "the ending" of the world as we know it today. Meanwhile, Isaiah's still using adjectives to describe the Messiah.
- g) Next we have four pairs of titles for the Messiah: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 - i) One has to understand that in Jewish thought, one's personality is associated with one's name. Jesus was never actually called by these titles in His First Coming. We as Christians do associate these titles with Jesus and let me explain how that is:
 - ii) First is "Wonderful Counselor". Yes we can say the bible itself is our counselor as to how to live our lives and to state the obvious, that's one way how God counsels us as to how to live. I'm also convinced that when we choose to follow Jesus, He guides us as to how best to live. It's not audible and we don't have to strain so we can hear His voice. I figure that if God's got something to say to us, He'll make it known to us His way and on His timing. The way I view it is if there's something I can't stand not doing for God (like these studies), He's leading me to write them even though I don't hear God audibly telling me what to say. My point is He gives us gifts and talents and the greatest way to live is to find a way to use those talents in order to make a difference for Him. Usually we have to do lots of trial and error in order to find out how to use those gifts, but that's how God leads us. My point is that's how God guides us and that's how He is a wonderful counselor.
 - iii) The second aspect is "Mighty God". This is one reason why Christians see Jesus as being God Himself. We'll see more of those clues coming up later in the book. To state the obvious, Christians argue Jesus is fully God and fully man. My only point here is this title reflects the fact that Jesus is fully God. To state more obvious stuff religious Jewish people reject Jesus as they refuse to accept the idea of the Messiah as God Himself. They see this phrase as "less literal" and referring to the fact that the Messiah will be so powerful, He'll be God-like. Obviously I disagree with that view but I wanted to state why they don't see Jesus as the Messiah.
 - iv) The third phrase is "Everlasting Father": We don't think of Jesus as being a Father, but one who's subservient to God the Father's desire just as we Christians should be subservient to God the Father's desire. The point here is just as we Christians see Jesus as guiding our lives, He's like a "wonderful father" who give us wisdom as to how to best live our lives. Jesus is a "father" to us in the sense that when we commit our lives to serving God, Jesus as part of the "God-head" fights for control of our lives and wants to be in charge of every aspect of our lives. In that sense He is like a wonderful father who wants to guide us for His glory.

- v) Finally there is "Prince of Peace". For those of us who have let Jesus be in charge of our lives, there is a wonderful sense of peace of knowing we can't ever mess up enough to lose our salvation. We're not saved based on how we act, we're saved based on what Jesus did for us. We then live as God desires not to earn His love, but because it's our desire to please Him who's in charge of our lives. My point is despite whatever we have to deal with at any given time, Jesus gives us peace of knowing our salvation is secure despite however we act. In that sense Jesus gives us far more peace than any government leader, or any other leader one can think of. He's far more the "Prince of Peace" than anyone else in history.
 - vi) The other good news is we finally made it to Verse 7:
9. Vs. 7: Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.
- a) One of the reasons most Jewish people reject Jesus is because He never ruled as leader in the nation of Israel. One of the bible verses that endlessly fascinates me is Luke 1:32. That verse gives a prediction that God will give Jesus the throne of his father David. It implies that Jesus is a direct descendant of David and Jesus will rule from David's throne. When that verse in Luke was written, the Romans ruled over Israel and there was no Israelite as king over them. My point is simply that Luke 1:32 has never been accomplished yet. That is yet another reason why Christians believe a Second Coming is necessary as to fulfill the prediction given to Mary before Jesus was actually born yet.
 - b) I state all of that as many Christians see the first part of Verse 7 as "Jesus only ruling over the hearts of Christians forever and ever". While that is literally true, I also believe there will be a future day when Jesus literally rules from David's throne which was located in Jerusalem and not just over "our hearts". That's what Isaiah is predicting here and that is what Luke says Chapter 1 of his gospel written about 700-800 years later.
 - c) It's now been 2,000 years since Luke's prediction plus almost another millennium more if we add Isaiah's prediction here. How do we know this will happen? For starters, Isaiah is full of predictions that happened soon after his lifetime, so Isaiah already has a record for being accurate to date. The next thing we have to accept is it's not just about us. God is waiting so long as He wants as many to be saved as possible. If Jesus returned say one hundred years ago, none of us would be born, let alone saved. At the same time we have to have that final believer so this prediction can literally come true as written.
 - d) From here the rest of the verse gets easier to discuss. Isaiah is saying whenever this will happen, the Messiah will be in charge of "upholding God's righteousness". Ever wonder what it is we as Christians do when Jesus literally rules this way? What I suspect occurs is we help Him enforce His rule around the world as to require the world to live by His laws for eternity. God's zeal does this, that is, His desire to rule over the world He created by having a world where people live as He desires.
 - e) I've always argued that God is perfect by definition. If God doesn't need anything, why does He desire to literally rule over the world one day? The way I describe it is if part of His nature is "love", then He desires somebody to express that love upon. As an example, if one has a gift to play a musical instrument, one does it because just enjoys doing it and not say primarily for the money. In a similar way, if God loves what He created, He does desire to rule over it so He can express that love upon what He created. That's why there has to be a future day where He literally rules over what He created so that those He did create can live as He desires. The point is all people will either choose to live as He wants or will be forced to acknowledge He's in charge. That's the literal purpose of God ruling I the future over this world.
 - f) OK, that's enough theology for one page. I'm now two thirds the way through this lesson and I've only covered about one third of the verses in this chapter. Let's speed it up!

10. Verse 8: The Lord has sent a message against Jacob; it will fall on Israel.
- a) In effect, the rest of this chapter and the first four verses of Chapter 10 switch tones as if to say, "Hey you people, here's God's eternal plan for your lives! Stop worrying about all of your problems and see the big picture of what's God's trying to accomplish here. I started with that comment about Verse 8 as I want you to notice the change in tone. Realize Isaiah is no longer talking about the Messiah to come but he's focusing once again on all of those Israelites who are so busy worried about their problems of the moment, they are ignoring the big picture of what God's trying to accomplish.
 - b) Before I go any further, realize that "Jacob and Israel" are effectively the same. Way back in Genesis 32:28, God renames Jacob "Israel". Jacob was the father of the 12 men who are the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. My point is while Abraham was first called by God to be the leader of the Israelites it was Abraham's grandson Jacob who became the leader of the 12 tribes of Israel. The reason God renames Jacob "Israel" is the word Israel means to "struggle with God". The idea of that name means that we struggle to obey God and live as He desires. The point as it relates here to Isaiah, is the name "Jacob" in a sense refers to the old name for the Israelites, about one who struggles but fails. The new name "Israel" refers to one who struggles with God, but overcomes by trusting in Him.
 - i) The reason I give that speech is to realize that the idea of the literal coming of the Messiah is "against Jacob" in the sense that life under the rule of the Messiah will overcome our struggle to fail to live as He desires we live. The reign will be upon "Israel" in the sense that those who struggle with God, but let His will rule over us will win in the sense we rule forever with the Messiah as He rules over the world in order to enforce God's laws upon those who refuse to live as He desires.
 - ii) All of that background theology is necessary in order to understand the rest of this chapter. Which is in effect about how we struggle with each other and fail to see God's long term plan for our lives as well as for the world we live in.
 - iii) To explain further, it's best if I move on to Verse 9 first.
11. Verse 9: All the people will know it-- Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria-- who say with pride and arrogance of heart, ¹⁰ "The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars."
- a) In effect, Isaiah's got his focus off of the eternal future and back to his present day reality. To paraphrase Isaiah, "God's got all of this wonderful future planned for you, but all you are worried about is other people attacking you. You think, we'll survive because we do trust in our own ability to survive. If another country knocks our walls down, we'll put in new stronger walls. If they kill our trees, we'll replace them with better trees". It's a false sense of trusting in our own abilities to rebound as opposed to trusting in God to guide us through our lives. While Isaiah is using the local politics as an example, you can see how easily this can apply to our lives as well.
 - b) That leads me back to the "struggle with God" concept. It's like Isaiah is saying, you think you don't need God to guide your lives as you're trusting in yourself for your future. God wants to guide us here and now. It's like saying, why rely upon your abilities, when there is a God in heaven willing to lead us to live as He desires and fill us with eternal joy. Yes of course, we still have to make the best decisions possible based on what we have to deal with at the moment, but God's saying He wants to guide us as we make those decisions so we can live to please Him not only in this life, but for all of eternity.
 - c) The reason Isaiah turns his focus back to the issues of the day is that the people who God has called to be witness for Him are still relying upon their own ability to recover and not His power to make a difference in the world around us. One of the greatest mistakes we Christians make is we fail to realize that God gives us the power to accomplish His will in the world to do His will. I'm not saying every moment is a literal miracle. I'm saying that if something is God's will, He gives us the ability to accomplish that will!

12. Verse 11: But the LORD has strengthened Rezin's foes against them and has spurred their enemies on.
- a) I'll be the first to admit, it's hard to study Isaiah at times, because it's constantly throwing names at us that are hard to keep straight. We have to remember that the primary target of this book were people living during Isaiah's time near him. Yes of course this book is full of applications for all believers, but one has to understand the context of what Isaiah has to deal with at that time to grasp these verses. With that reminder out of my system, remember that Isaiah was a priest living in the Southern Israelite Kingdom of Judah, and the northern Israelite kingdom called Israel, has made an alliance with their neighboring kingdom of Syria and are threatening to destroy the Southern Kingdom because they're refusing to join that alliance. I'm stating all of that ancient history as this verse is talking about the king of Syria at that time named Rezin.
 - b) What all this means is that the king of the Southern Kingdom where Isaiah lived worried about being attacked by the Northern Kingdom and Syria, God's message to the Israelites was in effect, don't worry about Rezin (king of Syria), because God's using the Assyrians to wipe them out. While the words Syria and Assyria are similar, they are hundreds of miles apart and are different kingdoms. Both the Syrians and the Israelites feared being wiped out by this larger enemy and formed an alliance. God's telling Isaiah a few years prior to this conquering that Rezin the leader of this group is going to lose and lose badly.
 - c) OK and I should care about all of this ancient history because? It reminds us that not only does God know all things but that life doesn't always pan out like we think it will. Those Israelites living in the Southern Kingdom were scared of an invasion by the Syrians while God's telling them and us, it won't happen as someone else is about to wipe them out as a nation. The point is worrying about the future is a waste of time because we don't know what the future will hold, even though God does. While I'm explain what's behind Isaiah giving this rant here, realize he's just getting warmed up:
13. Verse 12: Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west have devoured Israel with open mouth. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.
- a) OK now we have more strange names and places. If you realize that Arameans simply an ancient title that we call Syria today, that may help. You may recall the Philistines as the group that King Saul and King David had to fight for centuries. The Philistines migrated to parts of Israel and "kept their foot there" for many centuries. By the time Isaiah lived a few centuries later, the Philistines are still around. So you know they too get wiped out as a group by the Assyrians and that's part of the point here. What the text is saying is God's going to destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel because they've stubbornly turned their back on God despite the danger of being attacked by a larger army.
 - i) To make this simple, the Northern Kingdom is making the mistake of getting into an alliance with the Philistines and the Arameans instead of trusting God to guide them. What Isaiah's trying to communicate is that this alliance will fail. Israelites living in that Northern Kingdom are about to be wiped out for good because they refuse to repent and trust God for guidance.
 - ii) Again, the idea for us is we make the best plans we can to deal with problems. We can make alliances with non-Godly people because we fear what could happen to us. We could turn our back on God because we think by throwing our lot in with others around us will solve our problems. That's the mistake the Israelites living in the Northern Kingdom are making here. The danger to us is all about turning away from God to deal with life by making alliances with nonbelievers.
 - iii) That reminds me, ever wonder why the land of Israel is known as Palestine? That is because the Romans wanted to insult the Jewish people, so they renamed their land after their ancient enemy the Philistines. It got mispronounced over time and that is how we get the word Palestine today. Meanwhile, back to the story:

14. Verse 13: But the people have not returned to him who struck them, nor have they sought the LORD Almighty. ¹⁴ So the LORD will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; ¹⁵ the elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. ¹⁶ Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray. ¹⁷ Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks vileness. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.
- a) To make it simple, while Isaiah was focused earlier on the glory of the coming Messiah, he's now focused back on the sins of the Israelites who are not trusting in God despite all of the wonderful eternal plans He has for that land and that people.
 - b) Isaiah is spending these verses insulting his fellow Israelites by telling them what will be the consequences for not trusting in God. It's a lot like saying, "You don't trust in God? Well let me tell you how will suffer for not obeying the first of the 10 Commandments to honor God as God. In effect the rest is the details.
 - c) As a matter of fact, this rant by Isaiah goes on until Verse 4 of Chapter 10. I'm tempted to take this whole rant in as one lesson, but since I'm already on Page 11, I'm only writing on the verses here in Chapter 9. Before I give you the details about this rant, remember what is the big picture here for us Christians: It's the idea that if we as believing Christians fail to let God guide our lives, we will suffer as this group did so many millenniums ago. The issue isn't so much salvation, but about living our lives as a good witness for God. When we fail to do that, we too can be wiped out as these Israelites were way back then. With all that said, let me quickly discuss the details of these verses.
 - i) Verse 13 is saying that God's "behind" the enemies doing damage to Israel, but the Israelites living there refuse to see the obvious that God's allowing all of this bad stuff to occur because they stubbornly refuse to honor the God that's separated all of them in the first place to be a witness for Him.
 - ii) In Verse 14, Isaiah's using colorful ways of saying God's going to allow the great as well as the lowly in that land to be wiped out for refusing to trust in Him. When the text says the "head and tail", think of it as their leaders and the lowly servants. A similar expression is the "palm branch and the reed". A reed grows in a river. A palm branch is on top of a tall tree. It's just another colorful way of referring to the leaders and the common people of Israel as collectively ignoring God and paying a price for that fact.
 - iii) I could go on from here, but hopefully you get the idea. God's saying those who I have raised up as their leaders will fail, because those leaders have refused to lead My people closer to Me. Young men in their prime will be destroyed. People who suffer because they are widows or orphans will be wiped out. Despite all the facts of this upcoming destruction and death, God's not "satisfied".
 - iv) At this point it may help to remember why God created us in the first place: So we can bring Him glory in this world. That's why He separated us Christians as well as why He separated those Jewish people living so long ago. When we fail to live as God desires, He has every right to wipe us out as a nation, or a church or as any sort of group called to be a witness for Him.
 - v) My point is as we read about why God wiped out the Northern Israelite Kingdom and why He'll wipe out the Southern one about hundred years later is due to their failure to be a witness for God. But you may say, I'm eternally saved as I believe in Jesus as God. That's all well and good. The big question of course is what have you done with that salvation? Of course God wants us to be saved. The question we all have to face in God's day of judgment, is what have we done with it? That's why we were separated in the first place. To not use our lives to make a difference is to face the same tough judgment these Israelites faced way back then.

15. Verse 18: Surely wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns, it sets the forest thickets ablaze, so that it rolls upward in a column of smoke. ¹⁹ By the wrath of the LORD Almighty the land will be scorched and the people will be fuel for the fire; no one will spare his brother. ²⁰ On the right they will devour, but still be hungry; on the left they will eat, but not be satisfied. Each will feed on the flesh of his own offspring: ²¹ Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, and Ephraim on Manasseh; together they will turn against Judah. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.
- a) Like I said earlier, Isaiah's on a role here, insulting the Israelites for failing to trust God to guide their lives. This rant will continue until Verse 4 of the next chapter. However I've got enough to talk about in these final four verses to call it a lesson here.
 - b) Realize Isaiah could have just said, you Israelites are not being a good witness for God so He's going to wipe you out for continuing that way. Instead of simply just saying that, we get a chapter long rant with details of who gets wiped out, why they're wiped out and the reasons for it. I'm guessing in a short time from now, you're going to forget the details of why the Israelites got wiped out. You'll just know it as another historical fact and realize the reason for it is their failure to be a witness for God. What these verses should scare us into realizing is that if we fail to use our lives as a witness for Him, we can suffer the same fate as them. While our country may not be destroyed, I've seen many a ministry come to an end when we fail to live as God desires. The truth is once we've committed our lives to serving God, in effect He holds us to a "higher standard" as we're now called to be a living witness for Him. That's the idea behind this rant by Isaiah. The rest are just the details.
 - c) Speaking of details, let me go over them quickly: The Israelites living in the North, were at a point where they've ignored God for so long, they'll "burn up" like a forest fire. The text says that no one will be spared as that kingdom will end. People will either die there or be taken captive for hundreds of miles. There's a tradition that when the Assyrians did take people captive, they would put fishhooks in their mouths to line all of them up one after another as they marched far away. It was a way of embarrassing them. My point is as bad as this text is, the actual destruction is as bad as it's being described here.
 - d) Isaiah loves to use colorful "everyday" images to describe all of this destruction. He says it's like a man eating a meal but not being satisfied. That's the intent of the original text.
 - e) You may recall that I said of all the Israelite tribes that made up the Northern Kingdom, the largest was Ephraim. That tribal name was often a nickname for that kingdom. The second largest tribe was Manasseh. My point here is simply that Isaiah says that people living in that Northern Kingdom will attack each other during this tough time as well as try to attack the Southern Kingdom.
 - f) Again Isaiah ends this group of verses effectively with "But despite all of that, I (God) am not done with my wrath against them." As scary as all this wrath is, the reason we keep getting the phrase "God's not satisfied" is that they stopped living for the purpose that He made them (and us) for in the first place! The reason Isaiah goes on and on about this is as a warning to us what happens when we refuse to use our lives as a witness for God.
16. Let me back up and consider the whole chapter for a moment. A good part of it discussed the joy we can have when we put our trust in God when His Messiah (Jesus) rules over it. It tells us how much joy we can have when we trust God to guide our lives. Then we return to how those who are called by God are living in response to the plans He has for their lives. The lesson for us is we don't know our future, but God wants us to use our lives to make a difference for Him. If we just use our lives to enrich our own lives or worse, hurt others to enrich our lives, then we've wasted the greatest gift God's given us, our time. That's the lesson behind Chapter 9.
- a) With that said, my closing prayer is that we don't just study our bible and then ignore His will for our lives the rest of the day or week. My prayer is that we use our lives so we do make a difference for Him with our lives. That's why God separated us from nonbelievers in the first place. We ask that our lives be used as He desires in Jesus name, Amen.